CHARGES LONDON PRESS MISINFORMS

AMERICAN PUBLIC

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Thomas C. Hall Denounces Their Attitude and Declares It the Most Shameful Era in English History.

By THOMAS C. HALL, D.D.

Americans resent the charge that they are misinformed about the world war. And yet why do they not look up their past information in the light of recent events? Do they now pretend seriously to believe that "the German Emperor caused the war," or that the Crown Prince "forced the Emperor into war," or that "Liebknecht with 600 Socialists was shot on the streets of Berlin," or that "the Russian steam roller will be in six weeks in Berlin," or that "Germany is only a historic memory," or that "Belgian children are running about with both hands hacked off," or that "the Crown Prince is killed" and "the Emperor is insane" and "Breslau is taken" and "Krakow is burned"? Yet all these lies and a thousand more they received with a docile subjection from the hands of a London press, whose screaming yellowness and infinite capacity for bragging and untruth is one of the most shameful novelties of this sad new era in English history.

German papers may not even enter Canada or England. Yet while I was in Germany I read the English, French and Dutch papers and then passed them on to eager German friends quite freely. I have yet to find a serious misstatement in any German official telegram, or any important omission of retreats or reverses. Have any serious-minded Americans any such confidence in "Petrograd" or "Paris Special" or the London "Colonial dope," as it is called in London clubs? Moreover, if any careful Americans will take the trouble to go over the "Berlin reports" as given to us in the papers and compare them with the actual official statements in the Cologne "Gazette" or "Frankfurter Zeitung" they will be warned of a carelessness or worse in transmission that again justifies the charge that we do not know the facts. If so grossly misinformed in the past about the goings on under our eyes, if we have been so carefully and deliberately lied to by our London sources, is it not just possible that the trend and inner meaning of this world struggle has been equally misrepresented to us? We get our opinions and our "facts" from the same contaminated sources.

For instance, we are taught day in and day out that Germany was the aggressor; and blue books, yellow books and white books are cited, though I fear seldom really studied, to maintain this position. But the official documents are elaborately edited to make out a case. Evident mistranslation in some cases, and probable mistranslation in others, mars them all, and in the early reprint of the English white book, most widely used, there is some misdating that looks like deliberate fraud and has misled one of the most widely read analyses of it. These books do not even pretend to give all the documents, and in fact only begin at the end of a ten years' diplomatic struggle.

Whatever may be said of Austria, emphatically it may be maintained, and history will sustain the contention, that Germany neither expected at this time nor wanted nor caused the war. For ten years Germany has been struggling in a bad diplomatic mess to ward off from herself and Austria what she knew was the covert attack of military cliques in France, Russia, England and Belgium. She has not been well served by her diplomats. Germans have known that for some time. But she supposed she had passed the danger point and was breathing freely in glad thankfulness that it was so. M. Andre Tardieu, writing six years before the war and from a pronouncedly anti-German and pro-French point of view, as he himself says in his preface, remarks: "England, **who if France had been willing would have made war in 1905**, had seen in Germany's success a fresh motive for acting in conjunction with us for the purpose of establishing the European balance of power" ("France and Alliances," 1908, page 194). And Mr. Tardieu hardly tries to disguise the fact that the coalition against Germany was the result of the wounded vanity of France, beaten at Sedan; of Russia, beaten by Japan on the plains of Manchuria and the field of diplomacy by Austria, and England, beaten by Germany on the field of commercial expansion. These things linked with the vanity of Servia's and Belgium's Kings, who wanted to play the part of "World Powers," made the war possible.

This same London press has dinned into our ears the "Prussian oligarchy." There is no Prussian oligarchy. There is a strong Prussian aristocracy, whose influence, however, has been steadily waning, as the records of the Reichstag abundantly prove, and whose power will be still further weakened when the Government's promise has been embodied in law, according to which the three-class system of voting in Prussia for the provincial assembly will be abolished.

The empire itself was founded on manhood suffrage, and the cities of Germany have more independence and more democracy than New York, and are infinitely better, more cheaply and more justly governed. Prussia is, in fact, only one of the confederate States, with Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, Saxony, etc., as sister States, bound together as our States are by a constitution and a Senate (Bundesrath), and the Emperor has in some respects less power

than we have given the President, and the ruling sovereigns of the confederate States are his allies, not his vassals. To talk of any oligarchy in Germany is to display gross and inexcusable ignorance.

What men in London dislike is not miltarism, but German efficiency. Lord Roberts was, and Lord Kitchener is, far more of a militarist than Bernhardi ever aspired to be. Will England give up her navy and Russia and France their armies if Germany abandons her "militarism"? Russia was bullying France into a three years' military system, and France was insisting that Russia raise her army to eight millions and rebuild her navy as a condition of the "peaceful alliance." And England has had her "two Power standard" for her navy. These are nice angels of peace to talk piously of German militarism!

How many who are horrified at Bernhardi or Treitzske have really read either of these men and really know what they stand for? They are indeed free from some of our ingrained "homage our vices pay to virtue," but there is not an opinion expressed on force and war that could not be matched with a hundred quotations from English and American sources, including such apostles of peace as Mr. Roosevelt, Dr. Lyman Abbott and Lord Roberts. Both men, however, knew what they were talking about and do not pretend that a pagan world about us is really governed by Christian principles.

Can any sensible American listen with patience while the London press teaches us that an army made up of the flower of Germany's educated manhood in which professors of world-wide fame serve as privates and non-commissioned officers and in which there is no illiteracy and no intemperance is a "horde of barbarians" in comparison to an army of Turkos, Sikhs, London down-and-outs, Gurkhas, Cossacks, Tartars from the Amur River, Japanese, Tunislam Arabs and negroes from the Sahara? And that civilization depends on the victory of Russia's illiterate and drunken peasantry under the command of the corrupt, arrogant and brutal autocracy whose leading spirit is the Grand Duke Nicholas-Nicholaievitch?

Oh, but Belgium — that innocent suffering country! And the broken treaties! Germany broke no treaty that was indisputably binding upon anybody. For the conditions of the treaty of 1839 with the Prussian Union had hopelessly changed and England had in 1870 recognized that fact. Moreover Belgium was not neutral. She had entered into one-sided and secret military arrangements which liberated Germany from all moral obligation save those general rights of a neutral power which Germany promised to restore uninjured and to pay an indemnity for all wrong done. Exactly the same attitude was taken by England in Delagoa Bay when she marched through a country whose neutrality she had herself guaranteed to strike the Boers in the back. And so also Japan forced her way through neutral China, whose neutrality she had herself repeatedly guaranteed, in order to strike Tsing-tao behind.

The cant and hypocrisy of the London press is sickening. How did England treat neutral Egypt? How has she kept her own solemn promises to evacuate, given time and time again, only to be recklessly broken. It is rank cant to blame Germany for doing what every country would do if national safety seemed to require it. That Belgium has suffered horribly is England's fault. England could have exacted the offered guarantee of Germany to respect Belgium's integrity, autonomy and sovereignty and pay her compensation for the injury done her. Belgium could have saved herself by accepting the offer of peace and indemnity made her by Germany after the fall of Luettig and Namur. England promised a protection she should have known she could not give, and her's is the blame for Belgium's blasted national life. Hers are already the curses of more than one thoughtful Belgian.

Surely Bernard Shaw has awakened even ignorant, provincial, easy-going Americans to the hypocrisy in England's claim of high ethical motive for going to war. She was justified in not wanting Germany on the coast opposite her. Why does she not simply say so and stop her cant? Her real interest is, however, deeper. This war was to exterminate a commercial rival and "Made in Germany" is the real cause of England's attitude. Why does not England frankly say so and gain again her self-respect?

Well, but Austria's peremptory note and short time for consideration; surely had Austria waited diplomacy could have settled the matter! Perhaps, but that was just what Austria could not afford to have happen. Her political place in Europe depended upon her sharp, swift punishment of the dastardly crime against her sovereign house. We in America acted toward Mexico on far less provocation with far more severity and sharpness. We avenged an insult to our sailors by sending a fleet and occupying a town. What would have happened had, let us say, Mexicans murdered our President? Moreover, Russia has absolutely no material interest to protect in Servia that Austria has not guaranteed to protect. She asked neither land nor any abrogation of sovereignty. The fact is both Servia and Belgium are not the causes but the mere occasions of the war. The causes are the aggressions of Russia, or rather of her predatory autocracy. There is no hypocrisy about their plans. They have frankly waged war after war to gain an ice-free harbor and Austria was in their way to the south over the Balkans, as Japan barred the way to the east over Manchuria and Corea. This ambition of Russia's autocracy, together with the wounded vanity of France, has given England her chance to revive her old time-honored policy of fighting any rival on the sea.

Germany does quite properly aspire to be a "Weltmacht," but it is ignorance or worse to try and translate that by "world dominion." Germany was not really a world Power up to 1870; since then she has become one of the world's foremost Powers. That she be given her rightful place in the commercial and intellectual development of the world is all she asks and she was quite

content with the peaceful progress she was making, but her relatively incompetent enemies were not. That is the real reason of the war. A nation of 67,000,000, prosperous, advancing and contented, does not recklessly challenge the whole Western world to battle. Germany has nothing she could possibly gain at all comparable to her inevitable losses.

Has England protected Belgium? Has Russia shielded the sovereignty and dignity of Servia? If so, surely none of us want to be protected in just that way. Had Russia and England really been bent only on the high altruistic mission of protecting weaker States they could have reached their end more easily and with less ruin to the protected ones. Were the Allies now to be victorious Servia and Belgium would come out of the war as humble vassal States of Russia and England, for even France will be too weak for a generation, if indeed ever again, to play alone the part of a great Power.

Lord Beaconsfield is said to have remarked of Gladstone that he always played politics with false cards up his sleeve and was, moreover, firmly persuaded that the Holy Ghost put them there. England could not rob Holland of her navy, or France of her commerce and colonies, or the Boers of their gold and diamond mines without a pious prayer to heaven and a noble ethical reason on her lips. And so to-day she is picking Germany's pocket while Germany defends herself against Russia and France, and religious England has solemnly to persuade herself that she only wants the Gurkhas to sun themselves in Potsdam in order to wean dear Germany from Nietzsche and militarism. The gullible American people has been fooled, but England cannot fool God or future history.

What as a matter of fact has the attitude of political England been to the United States? There are two Englands. One is the England of our love and tradition, the England of the poets and painters with her religious and democratic services to all mankind. But we also know, alas, another England. This is the England that forced us into rebellion because she saw us gaining the carrying trade to the West Indies, which she wanted. This is the England that forced on us the war of 1812 and burned Washington because she dreaded the swift ships that outstripped her own. This is the England that fitted out raiding vessels to prey upon our commerce while North and South were at each other's throats; the England that even led by Gladstone hoped for the success of slavery and the severance of the Union, because she dreaded so strong a rival overseas. This is the England that under Sir Edward Grey has lashed the middle class of England in its provincial blindness to hate of Germany and love of Russia and Japan in the name of freedom and civilization! The sordid fears and wretched short-sightedness of this England will lead some day to her sad undoing, to the world's great loss and the sorrow of us all.

France and England have both attacked the United States. Both have tried to take adantage of critical moments in our history to stab us in the back. France dreamed of a Mexican rival to us. Germany alone of the three has been our consistent friend. How many thousands of Germans marched with the armies of the North as compared with the tens of Englishmen? England hired Hessians to fight us, but Frederick the Great sent us almost our salvation in Baron von Steuben. To-day no more peaceful and useful class in the community exists than those of German blood. Yet at the bidding of a yellow London press we are being taught that the most highly organized, the least illiterate, the most civilized and musical and art-loving nation in Europe is a nation of brutes, barbarians, wanton vandals and ambitious Huns. Were the situation not so shameful and dangerous one could afford to ignore it with a smile of contempt; but it is a very dangerous situation. We have been lied to so consistently that we have forgotten that Germany may triumphantly win, and that then among us an insulted, proud and united German political party can with help from Ireland lead the Scandinavian, Polish and Austro-Hungarian vote in an anti-English and anti-Japanese movement, whose outcome no man can foresee. That vote is at least representative of 25,000,000 and will have much silent support from the Roman Catholic Church — and may at any time hold the balance of power. Germany can now hardly be crushed. A competent expert says it would take an army of 5,000,000 to reconquer the fifth of France and the whole of Belgium against the forces of Germany, and that it would be a two to three years' work at least. Germany cannot be starved out. She and Austria-Hungary are self-supporting, and have, moreover, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Belgium and part of France to fall back upon. She can hold out for seven to ten years — can Russia do that, or France?

Where has "militarism" led the British censorship? What has England to show to correspond to all the loud-mouthed bragging of Churchill and, alas, Lloyd George? What will sensible Englishmen say to it all when the pressure of war is taken away and they can freely speak their minds? And will not Americans be shamed by their admissions, already being made more freely than the London censorship permits the crowd to know, seeing we have almost out-Englished England in vulgar abuse of one of the best elements, in our life, or indeed in the life of the world?